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# Balancing Wilderness Protection and Economic Development
## The Politics of Planning for Atikaki, 1972-1983

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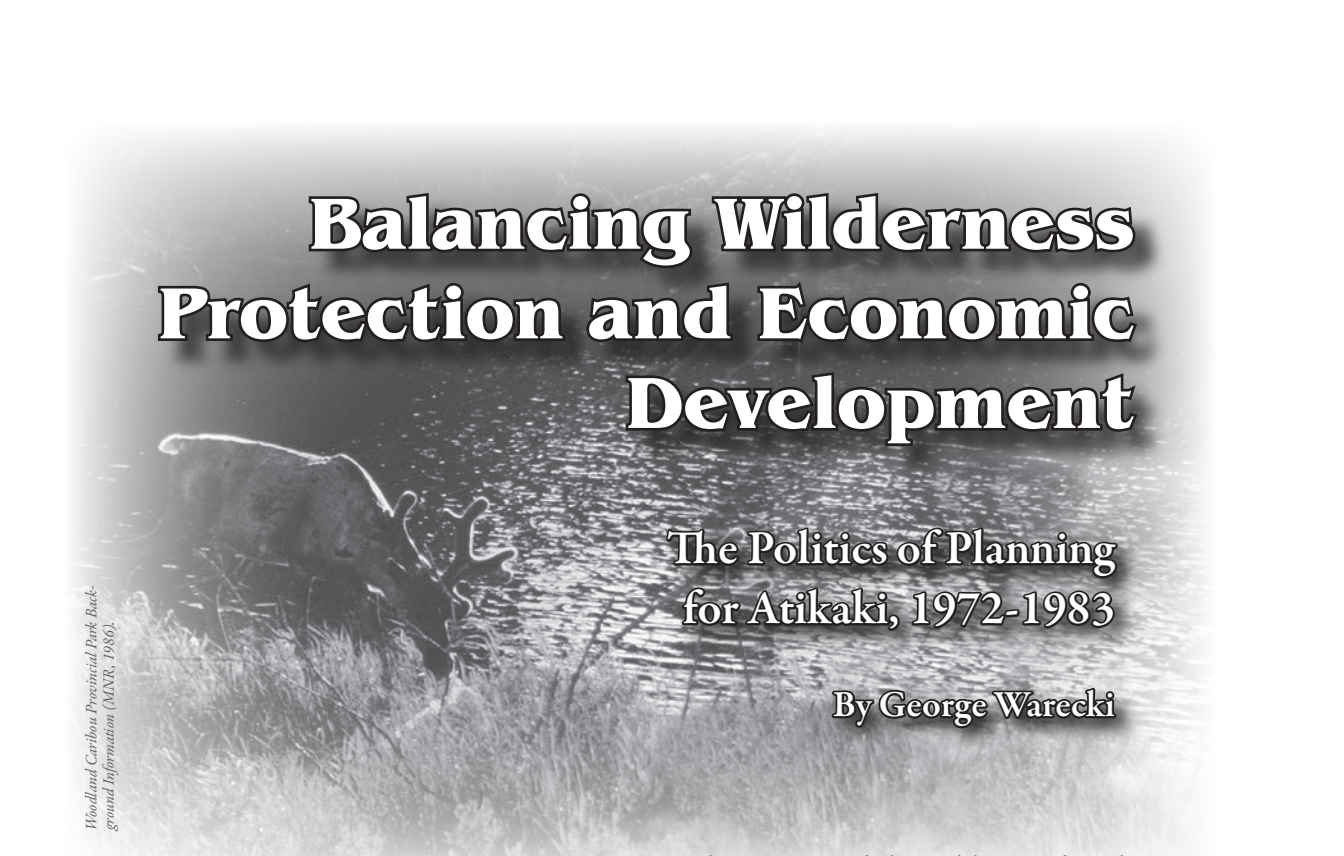
Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article nous traitons de la politique de planification de parcs naturels dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario, en prenant pour exemple le cas du parc projeté pour la région « Atikaki » entre le lac Winnipeg, Manitoba, et Red Lake en Ontario. Pour analyser les relations entre les différentes parties prenantes dans l'élaboration de ce projet, nous ferons appel aussi bien à la science politique qu'à l'histoire des politiques environnementales. En 1972, un partisan de la protection de l'environnement lança une campagne pour établir un vaste secteur sauvegardé interprovincial, un parc naturel qui serait lui-même encerclé par une seconde zone, une zone tampon ouverte à des utilisations multiples, et cela afin de protéger un paradis pour les canoéistes. À la coalition formée par les groupes qui soutenaient ce plan, s'opposa différents groupes d'intérêts locaux, représentants des industries minières, forestières, ou même touristiques, notamment, dans ce dernier cas, les opérateurs de camps de pêche accessibles par avion seulement. En raison de ce conflit, le Ministère des Ressources Naturelles de l'Ontario rouvrit le dossier, réexaminant la proposition du parc Atikaki à la lumière des réactions que ce projet suscitait dans la population. Quand les négociations ouvertes pour l'établissement d'un parc national au Manitoba se trouvèrent dans une impasse, à la fin des années 1970, les deux gouvernements provinciaux substituèrent à la proposition originale, deux propositions séparées et moins ambitieuses : la province du Manitoba établit le Parc provincial Atikaki en 1985; et, en Ontario, quelque 4,600 kilomètres carrés, furent, en 1983, alloués au Parc provincial Woodland Caribou.

# Balancing Wilderness Protection and Economic Development

## The Politics of Planning for Atikaki, 1972-1983

By George Warecki



*Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986).*

In January 1978, Marc Wermanger, a wilderness conservationist from Minnesota, presented a brief to the Ontario Royal Commission on the Northern Environment. The commission, with representation from the Federal and Provincial Governments and First Nations, was established to investigate "the needs and special problems facing the environment and citizens of Northern Ontario."[1] Wermanger vented frustration. He had spent four years trying to persuade politicians, civil servants and the public to adopt his grand scheme for a 4,950 square-mile protected wilderness in the Atikaki area, straddling the Ontario-Manitoba border. He charged that structural flaws in government and society stacked the deck in favour of resource extractive industries, at the expense of protectionist interests. The upshot was "the inability of the average person to influence the system and to have a say in the future of northwestern Ontario."[2] This critique raised crucial

[1] Harvey McCue, "The Modern Age, 1945-1980," in *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on The First Nations*, edited by Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith Ontario Historical Studies Series (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 405. Premier William Davis's Progressive Conservative minority Government appointed the commission to defuse a political crisis sparked by the Reed Paper Company. See Doug Macdonald, *The Politics of Pollution: Why Canadians Are Failing Their Environment* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 105-7; and W. Robert Wightman and Nancy M. Wightman, *The Land Between: Northwestern Ontario Resource Development, 1800 to the 1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 322-3.

[2] Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Provincial Parks Records, RG-1, [formerly] IB-3, box 58, file WOODC-3, 1977-8, Typescript [Brief by Marc Wermanger to the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment, 19 January 1978].

## Abstract

*This article is about the politics of planning for wilderness in northwestern Ontario. It blends environmental history and political science to discuss the relationships between diverse interests in provincial policy-making for the "Atikaki" region between Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Red Lake, Ontario. In 1972, a Minnesota-based conservationist launched a campaign to establish a huge, interprovincial wilderness area encircled by a multiple-use buffer zone, to protect a canoeists' paradise. Supporting conservation groups formed a coalition, opposed by local "productive" interests – forestry, mining, and fly-in fishing camp operators. The conflicted Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources reviewed the Atikaki proposal and weighed public input. When negotiations for a national park in Manitoba stalled in the late 1970s, the two provincial governments, recognizing key resource conflicts, replaced the original wilderness proposal with smaller, separate designs. Manitoba established Atikaki Provincial Park in 1985. Some 4,600 square kilometres on the Ontario side became Woodland Caribou Provincial Park in 1983.*

***Résumé:*** *Dans cet article nous traitons de la politique de planification de parcs naturels dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario, en prenant pour exemple le cas du parc projeté pour la région 'Atikaki' entre le lac Winnipeg, Manitoba, et Red Lake en Ontario. Pour analyser les relations entre les différentes parties prenantes dans l'élaboration de ce projet, nous ferons appel aussi bien à la science politique qu'à l'histoire des politiques environnementales. En 1972, un partisan de la protection de l'environnement lança une campagne pour établir un vaste secteur sauvegardé interprovincial, un parc naturel qui serait lui-même encerclé par une seconde zone, une zone tampon ouverte à des utilisations multiples, et cela afin de protéger un paradis pour les canoéistes. À la coalition formée par les groupes qui soutenaient ce plan, s'opposa différents groupes d'intérêts locaux, représentants des industries minières, forestières, ou même touristiques, notamment, dans ce dernier cas, les opérateurs de camps de pêche accessibles par avion seulement. En raison de ce conflit, le Ministère des Ressources Naturelles de l'Ontario rouvrit le dossier, réexaminant la proposition du parc Atikaki à la lumière des réactions que ce projet suscitait dans la population. Quand les négociations ouvertes pour l'établissement d'un parc national au Manitoba se trouvèrent dans une impasse, à la fin des années 1970, les deux gouvernements provinciaux substituèrent à la proposition originale, deux propositions séparées et moins ambitieuses : la province du Manitoba établit le Parc provincial Atikaki en 1985 ; et, en Ontario, quelque 4,600 kilomètres carrés, furent, en 1983, alloués au Parc provincial Woodland Caribou.*


issues about democracy and land use planning in the north during the 1970s. A closer look reveals that many interests shaped public policy for Atikaki, as the Provincial Government struck a balance between wilderness protection and economic development.

This paper contributes to environmental history in two ways. First, it adds to literature that examines the impact of state-sponsored conservation programs upon local communities.[3] Previous works confirmed the value of local studies to illuminate broad themes of changing resource use and competing ideologies. By devoting greater attention to local and regional dynamics, and changing power relations between user groups, these studies—in the language of political science—examined a wider range of the "policy community" than earlier works. The focus here on distinct "policy networks" helps to explain how the state mediated conflicts between competing

[3] A sample includes Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Louis Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Richard Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: the Origins of Conservation in Northern New*

interests.[4] A second contribution is to extend scholarship that explores the interaction of ideas, institutions, and interest groups in Canadian park policy and wilderness politics.[5]

In Ontario, the establishment of "wilderness" parks has been controversial. An American-based campaign to create an international park in the Quetico-Superior region from 1927 to 1960 drew local opposition from northwestern Ontario residents, eager to protect their economic interests.[6] Public controversy intensified during the late 1960s with the emergence of modern environmental politics, led by the Algonquin Wildlands League (AWL, established 1968) and Pollution Probe (established 1969). Both organizations skillfully employed the mass media to spread public awareness of ecological issues.[7] In the successful campaign to ban logging from Quetico Provincial Park,

*England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Bill Parenteau, "'A Very Determined Opposition to the Law': Conservation, Angling Leases, and Social Conflict in the Canadian Atlantic Salmon Fishery, 1867-1914," *Environmental History* 9 (July 2004), 436-463; John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); George Colpitts, *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Ken Cruikshank and Nancy B. Bouchier, "Blighted Areas and Obnoxious Industries: Constructing Environmental Inequality on an Industrial Waterfront, Hamilton, Ontario, 1890-1960," *Environmental History* 9 (July 2004), 464-496; and Tina Loo, *States of Nature: Conserving Canada's Wildlife in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

[4] An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Canadian Historical Association in London, Ontario, June 2005, where John Sandlos also used these concepts; "Federal Spaces, Local Conflicts: National Parks and the Exclusionary Politics of the Conservation Movement in Ontario, 1900-1935," *Journal of the CHA* New Series 16 (2005), 293-318. See also William D. Coleman and Grace Skogstad, "Policy Communities and Policy Networks: A Structural Approach," in *Policy Communities and Public Policy in Canada: A Structural Approach*, edited by William Coleman and Grace Skogstad (Toronto: Copp Clark, Pitman, 1990), chap.1; and Melody Hessing and Michael Howlett, *Canadian Natural Resource and Environmental Policy: Political Economy and Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), chap. 4. A "policy community" refers to "all those involved in policy formulation," including state and local actors, productive and non-productive, and those directly and indirectly interested. A "policy network" is "a subset of community members who interact with each other" over specific sets of issues. "Networks are more restrictive and enjoy a more direct pipeline to the policy process." Hessing and Howlett, *Canadian Natural Resource and Environmental Policy*, 77.

[5] Paul Kopas, *Taking the Air: Ideas and Change in Canada's National Parks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 187; Marilyn Dubasak, *Wilderness Preservation: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Canada and the United States* (New York: Garland, 1990); Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia,, 1965-96* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), and "Wilderness Politics in BC: The Business Dominated State and the Containment of Environmentalism," in Coleman and Sklogstad, *Policy Communities*, chap. Six; Gerald Killan, *Protected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Parks System* (Toronto: Dundurn Press with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1993); and George Warecki, *Protecting Ontario's Wilderness: A History of Changing Ideas and Preservation Politics, 1927-1973* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

[6] Gerald Killan and George Warecki, "The Battle for Wilderness in Ontario: Saving Quetico-Superior, 1927-1960," in *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History*, edited by Roger Hall, William Westfall and Laurel Sefton MacDowell (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society and Dundurn Press, 1988), 341-5.

[7] On Pollution Probe, see Jennifer Read, "'Let Us Heed the Voice of Youth': Laundry Detergents,


***Location of Woodland Caribou Provincial Park.*** *Source: Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986).*

Gavin Henderson, Executive Director of the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada (NPPAC, established 1963), popularized the conflict as a symbolic environmental issue. Many people considered the "multiple-use" approach *passé*; commercial activities were unacceptable in a wilderness park.[8] The Quetico victory also led to a rethinking of the preservationist agenda.

In the mid-1970s, both the wilderness advocates and the parks bureaucracy in the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) championed a "systems approach" to planning. Their efforts culminated with the brief 1978 Provincial Parks Policy, and a detailed accompanying manual known as the "Blue Book" (or the "Gospel Relating to Parks"). The latter was a world-renowned protectionist document and a blueprint for expansion of the park system. Preservationists revered it as a touchstone during the hotly contested Strategic Land Use Planning (SLUP) process that followed. Historian Gerald Killan has provided a lively account of this fierce battle between wilderness park proponents and competing interests, which climaxed in 1983.[9] That spring, Natural Resources Minister Alan Pope announced a decision to create 155 new parks, and he immediately established six new wilderness parks. But, the protectionist policies of the Blue Book were temporarily set aside: the new parks would be open to min-

Phosphates and the Emergence of the Environmental Movement in Ontario," *Journal of the CHA* New Series 7 (1997), 227-25. On the AWL, see Gerald Killan and George Warecki, "The Algonquin Wildlands League and the Emergence of Environmental Politics in Ontario, 1965-1974," *Environmental History Review* 16 (Winter 1992), 1-27. Other works on the environmental awakening in Canada include Robert Page, *Northern Development: the Canadian Dilemma* Canada in Transition Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), chap. 2; and Macdonald, *The Politics of Pollution*, chap. 2.

[8] Gavin Henderson, "Will Quetico Wilderness Pay the Price of Progress?" *Globe and Mail*, 26 October 1970, 7. The dominance of "multiple-use" in managing Ontario's provincial parks began in the 1930s with Algonquin Superintendent (later Deputy Minister) Frank MacDougall. He adapted the approach of the United States Forest Service to strike a balance between logging, recreation, and nature protection. See Killan, *Protected Places*, 59-73; and Gerald Killan and George Warecki, "J.R. Dymond and Frank A. MacDougall: Science and Government Policy in Algonquin Provincial Park, 1931-1954," *Scientia Canadensis* XXII-XXIII (1998-99), 131-156.

[9] Killan, *Protected Places*, chaps. 7 and 9. See also Arlin Hackman, "Ontario's Park System Comes of Age," in *Endangered Spaces: The Future for Canada's Wilderness* Henderson Book Series no. 11, edited by Monte Hummell (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1989), 172-8.

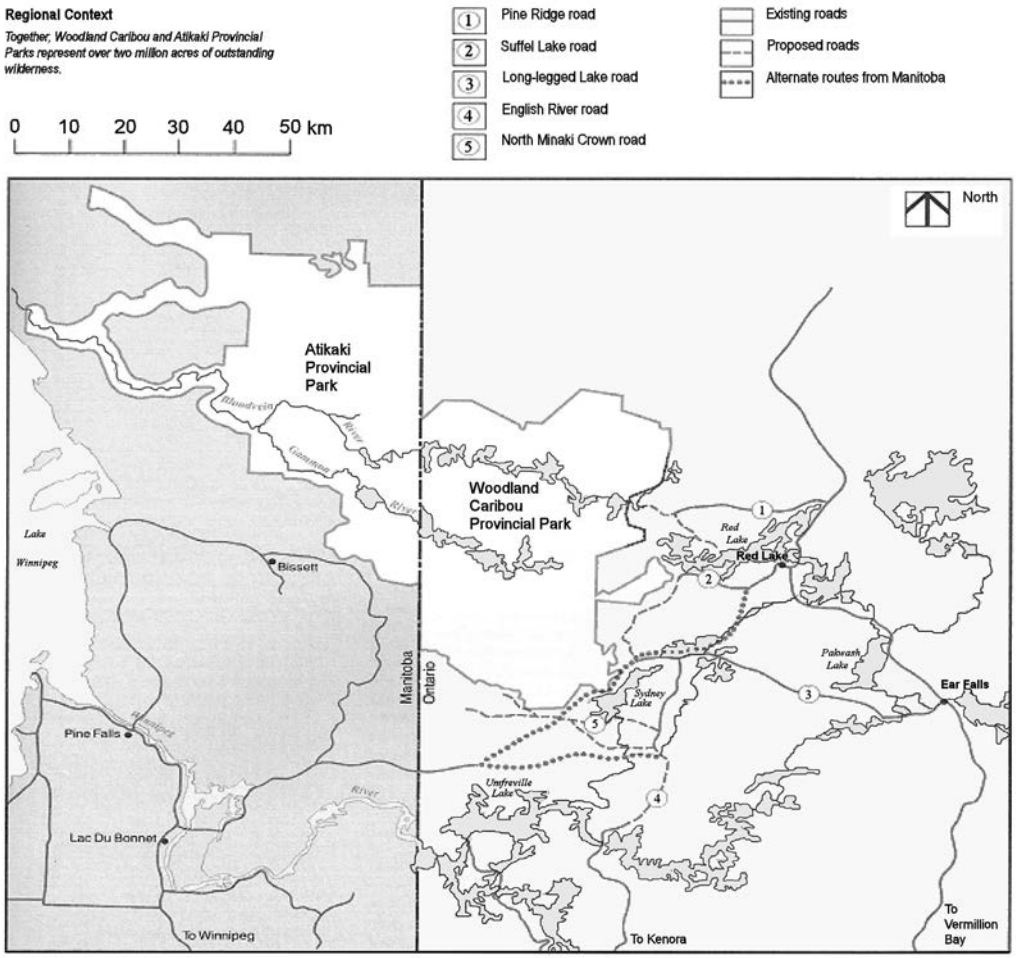



***Figure 1**: Manitoba's Atikaki Provincial Park and Ontario's Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. Source: Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986).*

ing, hunting, trapping, and commercial tourist lodges—dubbed "non-conforming uses" by the preservationists. One of the new wilderness parks was Woodland Caribou—within the Atikaki region of northwestern Ontario.

While the context for Woodland Caribou's formal establishment and subsequent planning controversies has been well documented, earlier proposals to protect the region are not well known. Yet, these proposals helped to shape the park's creation in 1983, as a bundle of compromises. In effect, the intensity of the SLUP battle has obscured the significance of an earlier campaign. The only scholarly treatment of this episode, a brief discussion by John Lehr from the Manitoba perspective, noted that provincial politicians "regarded the issue as a political hot potato." Despite "widespread public support" for the Atikaki proposal,

Ontario officials declined to support the interprovincial plan, "apparently convinced by the economic arguments of the resource industries."[10] The present account considers a broader range of forces in shaping provincial policy for the Ontario portion of the region.

Planning for the "Atikaki" area began in the mid-twentieth century when two provincial governments took steps to protect wildlife habitat and recreational resources. In 1972, Marc Wermanger began a public campaign to protect this canoeists' paradise of lakes and rivers. He originally envisioned a huge, interprovincial wilderness area, encircled by a multiple-use buffer zone. A policy network of conservation groups in both provinces formed a coalition to co-ordinate efforts. Local "productive" interests—forestry, mining, and fly-in fishing camp operators—formed another network that opposed the plan. The conflicted Ontario MNR reviewed the Atikaki proposal and incorporated public input into its recommendations. Its various divisions—Lands, Forests, Mines, Parks, and Fish and Wildlife—often acted as extensions of different policy networks. When negotiations for a national park in Manitoba stalled in the late 1970s, the two provincial governments, recognizing that key resource conflicts could not be resolved, replaced the original wilderness proposal with smaller, separate designs. A substantial part of the Manitoba section was declared a provincial park reserve in 1983, and became Atikaki Provincial Park in 1985. Some 4,600 square kilometres (about 55% of the original proposed size) on the Ontario side became Woodland Caribou Provincial Park in 1983.[11] (Figure 1)

The Atikaki campaign provides a window on the activities of wilderness advocates, the province's evolving approach to park planning, and the response of local residents in northwestern Ontario. It represents a transition in the history of wilderness planning and advocacy from an earlier model of multiple-use conservation, to a more strategic and more protectionist, scientifically-based "systems" approach. Advocates and planners agreed upon the concept of a wilderness park that excluded commercial resource extraction and most mechanized recreation. But for political reasons, politicians ensured the viability of local economic interests like tourist lodges and fly-in fishing camps, while forestry and mining were kept to the periphery. The park eventually created in Ontario—Woodland Caribou—reflected this new balance between protection and development.

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[10] John C. Lehr, "The Origins and Development of Manitoba's Provincial Park System," *Prairie Forum* 26 (Fall 2001), 249-51. Lehr identified "changing philosophies of conservation" as a key force in Manitoba. Similar tensions developed in Ontario. *Ibid.*, 241, 249.

[11] The original plan called for 4,950 square miles (12,820 square kms.): 3,150 square miles (8,159 square kms.) in Ontario and 1,800 square miles (4,662 square kms.) in Manitoba. *Wilderness Now: A Statement of Principles and Policies of the Algonquin Wildlands League* Third revised edition (Toronto, 1980), 38.

## Plans and Protectionist Precedents

The idea of state action to protect the Atikaki wilderness propelled four initiatives: two by the province of Ontario, one by the Manitoba and federal governments, and the fourth by a private citizen. Although they differed slightly in rationale, all four shared "a managerial ethos"[12] that active, human intervention was required to safeguard particular environmental values.

In the mid-twentieth century, the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests (reorganized as MNR in 1972) protected portions of the Atikaki region. One motive was to set aside habitat for declining populations of woodland caribou ("*Atikaki*" means "country of the caribou" in Salteaux-Ojibway). The species, once plentiful across Ontario north of Lake Nipissing, had receded farther north since the advent of European settlement. The province banned non-Native hunting of the species in 1929, while Native hunting under treaty rights continued. Provincial authorities, having identified "a large herd near Irregular Lake," in the southern part of the region, created the Caribou Game Preserve in 1948. Active management was limited to "population surveys, mortality assessment and research" until 1975, when fish and wildlife officials began more interventionist techniques of habitat management.[13] A second step secured part of the region until its future could be planned. During the mid-1960s, Lands and Forests staff struggled to keep up with a surging demand for outdoor recreation. They expanded the provincial parks system, opening ten new parks in southern Ontario, and establishing fifty-two "park reserves" across the province.[14] As part of this expansion, a relatively small area (about 500 square miles) adjoining the Manitoba border was designated the Irregular Lake Park Reserve in 1967.[15] Even at this early stage, the Parks Branch recognized the area's potential as a wilderness park, despite the presence of a dozen commercial or private establishments.[16]

The third initiative came from Manitoba. As John Lehr argued, the provincial government invited federal authorities in the mid-1960s to develop "a second national park in Manitoba."[17] The result was a proposal in April 1969 for a "Bloodvein Wilderness National Park" of 2,400 square miles, "centering on the drainage of the Bloodvein River," with

[12] The concept is from MacEachern, *Natural Selections*, 190.

[13] *Woodland Caribou in Ontario: Background to a Policy* (MNR, 1989), 21; "large herd" quote from *Woodland Caribou Provincial Park: Background Information* (MNR, 1986), 39.

[14] Killan, *Protected Places*, 116.

[15] AO, Parks and Recreational Areas Planning—Regional files [formerly] RG-1-51-2, box 7, folder NW-3 (1977-8), J.W. Keenan to James Foulds, 7 June 1976.

[16] See correspondence in AO, MNR Land Use Co-ordination Branch, Local Land Use Planning Files, RG 1-344, acc. 15806, box 18, Recreational LUP: Sioux Lookout District, Aug.-Sept. 1966.

[17] Lehr, "Origins and Development," 249. Riding Mountain National Park had been established in Manitoba in 1929.

provincial protection for the Pigeon and Berens Rivers. Ideally, the authors noted, "the headwaters of the Bloodvein River (in Ontario) should be included."[18] The proposal emerged during a transitional period in the history of federal planning. Traditionally, parks were "created wherever there was political support or interest." In the early 1970s this "ad-hoc process" was replaced by *systems planning*, as bureaucrats selected park sites to "represent the characteristic physical, biological, and geographic features of each of 39 natural regions" across Canada.[19] The Bloodvein national park proposal typified early efforts by glossing over the impact of the scheme on Aboriginal peoples.[20] It drew an "immediate negative reaction" from residents who feared the loss of their traditional livelihood.[21]

Planners, geographers, and politicians struggled to resolve conflicts inherent in the proposal. How could one weigh the potential for resource extraction against other wilderness values, like recreation and aesthetic appreciation?[22] The task was complicated by the lack of a "detailed assessment" of the region's natural resources. Manitoba representatives remained skeptical of the plan because they would have to forego pulpwood production, hunting, mineral development, and traditional economic activities (trapping, wild rice harvesting and commercial fishing) for residents of the Bloodvein Indian Reserve. The governments of Manitoba and Ontario were "reluctant to provide provincial land free of all encumbrances"; they carefully guarded their autonomy to develop natural resources on publicly-owned lands. Provincial park policies would give them much more flexibility in this regard than the rigidly protectionist National Park

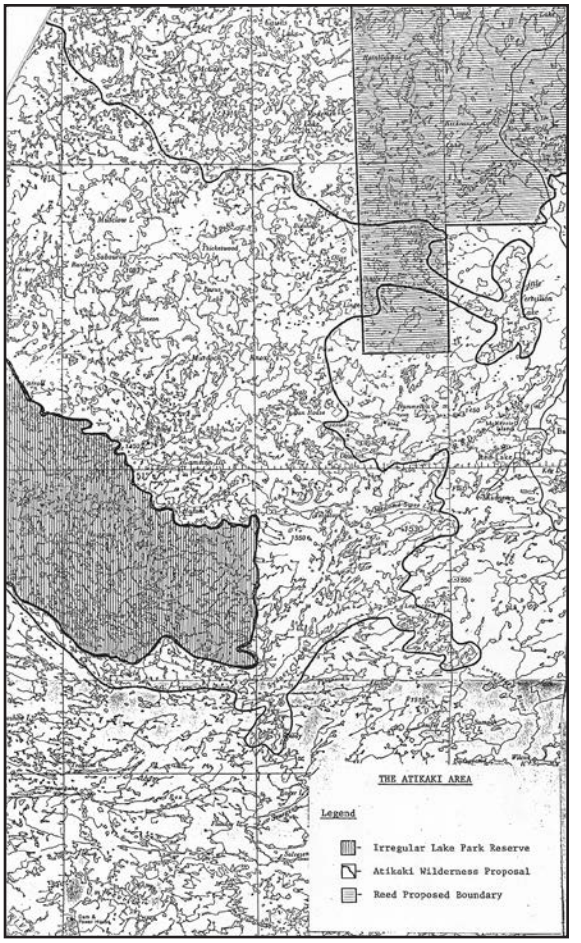
[18] W.D. Addison Papers (private collection; used with permission), Kakabeka Falls, Ontario (hereafter AP), Atikaki file, "Confidential: National Park Proposals for Manitoba," National and Historic Parks Branch, April 1969, 8, 18. My thanks to Bill Addison for his generous assistance.

[19] Kevin McNamee, "From Wild Places to Endangered Spaces: A History of Canada's National Parks," in *Parks and Protected Areas in Canada: Planning and Management*, edited by Philip Dearden and Rick Rollins (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 31. See also MacEachern, *Natural Selections*, 233-5; Kopas, *Taking the Air*, 53-66; and Julia E. Gardner, "Park System Planning: Limitations in the Pursuit of Rationality," *Plan Canada* 30 (September 1990), 10-19. System planning for the U.S. National Parks began in the 1960s, culminating with an official plan in 1972; similar efforts began that year in Ontario, followed by Manitoba in 1974.

[20] "National Park Proposals for Manitoba," 42, 16. See also Acres Research and Planning Ltd., *An Economic Impact Study of the Proposed Bloodvein National Park* (1968). On "protected areas" and Aboriginal peoples, see Theodore Binnema and Melanie Niemi, "'Let the line be drawn now': Wilderness, Conservation and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People From Banff National Park in Canada," *Environmental History* 11 (October 2006), 724-50; and John Sandlos, "Not Wanted in the Boundary: The Expulsion of the Keeseekoowenin Ojibway Band from Riding Mountain National Park," *Canadian Historical Review* 89 (June 2008), 189-222.

[21] Michael Keating, "Preserving the Wilderness Principle," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 27 November 1975.

[22] David R. Witty, "Development of a National Park Designation and Evaluation System: A Case Study of the Proposed Bloodvein National Park," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Waterloo, School of Urban and Regional Planning, 1973).




***Irregular Lake Park Reserve (1967)**. Source: AO, RG 1-51-2, box 7, Vol. 2, file 1977-78, NW-3, Parks Planning Branch, "Briefing Notes for the Hon. Frank Miller," 29 June 1977.*

Policy. Thus, the proposal stalled in the mid-1970s.[23]

A fourth initiative to protect the region was launched by Marc Wermanger, an experienced guide and canoeing enthusiast from Minnesota. In his view, the national park proposal lacked viable plans to manage the flow of canoeists and to foster local economic development. He devoted eighteen months during 1972-1973 to prepare a counter-proposal for a Manitoba-Ontario wilderness area.[24] Fellow Minnesotan and veteran preservationist Sigurd F. Olson counseled Wermanger to contact Gavin Henderson of the NPPAC.[25] In October 1972 Wermanger wrote to Henderson, seeking support and explaining his rationale.[26] Protecting Atikaki could provide a good alternative to Quetico Park and other areas that were "overcrowded with canoeists." The "revival of wilderness canoeing," as historian Bruce Hodgins noted, was "an elite, southern-based, urban-generated" trend; its central irony was that canoeing "both helps to sustain and to threaten the wilderness" through increased human access.[27] Avoiding this

[23] *Ibid*., 7-8, 12-13, chap. 3. By 1972, Manitoba was also considering provincial park status for a 2500 square-mile wilderness core, with protected river corridors. Lehr, "Origins and Development," 249-50.

[24] "Wilderness Park Debate Continues," *Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal*, 24 January 1978.

[25] Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, Sigurd F. Olson Papers (hereafter MHS, SFO; used with permission), 29.C.11.1B, box 1, corresp. and misc. files, Wermanger to Olson, 13 June 1972, and Olson to Wermanger, 15 June 1972. For Olson, see David Backes, *A Wilderness Within: The Life of Sigurd F. Olson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[26] Trent University Archives, Peterborough, Ontario, National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada fonds, (hereafter TUA, NPPAC), 86-002, box I, file 11, Robin Fraser file, Wermanger to Gavin Henderson, 12 October 1972. All quotes from this source.

[27] Bruce Hodgins, "Canoe Irony: Symbol of Wilderness, Harbinger of Destruction," in *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture*, edited by James Raffan and Bert Horwood (Peterborough: Betelgeuse Books, 1988), 55, 45. See also Jamie Benidickson, *Idleness, Water, and a Canoe: Reflections on Paddling For Pleasure* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

contradiction, Wermanger predicted that "the many resorts and fly-in camps" would be the "chief block on the Ontario side." Faced with increased canoe traffic, the operators "should be willing to be resettled in more remote areas." His forecast was only half-correct. The tourism business would have little enthusiasm for relocating.[28]

An important assessment of the proposal came from Bill Addison, a forester, science teacher, and wilderness defender from Thunder Bay. His initial response was negative. Addison knew much of the area first-hand; he agreed that "at least part" of the area was well suited for a park. But, he warned the NPPAC, "there isn't a hope in hell of Wermanger realizing his magnificent proposal.... The chief reason... is mineral resources, with native rights and Indian reserves looming a large second."[29] This was a reasonably accurate assessment—and yet, in the end, Wermanger got a full half-measure of his original goal. Several Native reserves were located on the Manitoba side of the planning area, including Little Grand Rapids, whose people had rights to traditional land use in the Atikaki region. There were no reserves in the Ontario portion, but Treaty 3 and Treaty 5 First Nations whose communities lay to the north and south conducted traditional harvesting of fish, caribou, furbearers, and wild rice. Addison's comments were partly a reaction to the increasing organization and militancy of First Nations across Canada, and particularly in northwestern Ontario.[30]

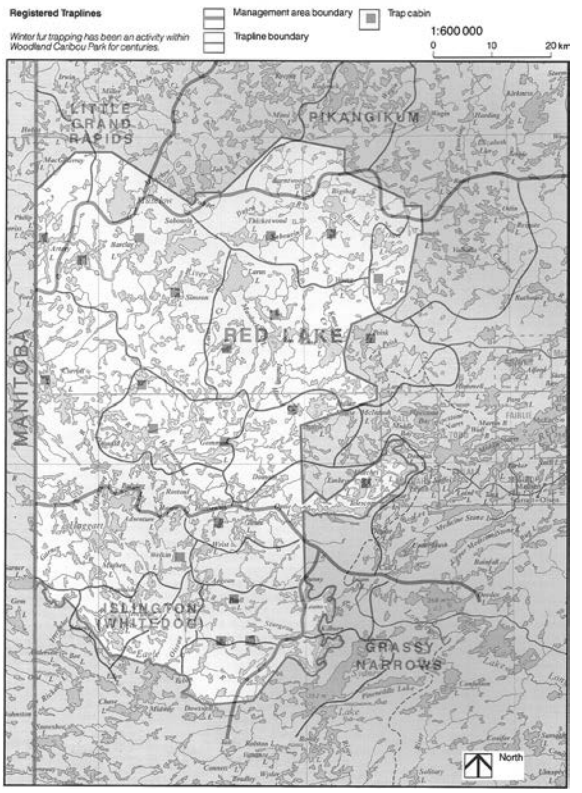
***Canoeists at Rockfall on Haggart River.*** *Source: Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986).*

Addison followed his pessimistic

[28] Wermanger repeated this argument in "Resounding Silence: A Proposal for a Wilderness Area on the Ontario-Manitoba Border," *Manitoba Nature* (Winter 1972), 4-9; and "Atikaki," Ontario's Sunset Country *News* (Spring 1975), 5.

[29] AP, Atikaki file, Robin Fraser to Bill Addison, 5 February 1973; *ibid*., Addison to Fraser 13 February 1973.

[30] J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* Revised Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), chaps. 12-14; McCue, "The Modern Age, 1945-1980," 400-417. The communities were all Ojibway (Anishinaabe): Pikangikum First Nation (97 kms. north of Red Lake), and Wabaseemoong Independent First Nation and Grassy Narrows First Nation (110 kilometres north and northeast of Kenora, respectively). *Woodland Caribou Signature Site: Background*




**Registered Traplines.** *Source: Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986).*

prognosis with a more significant critical appraisal. He cautioned preservationists "to think carefully about this proposal." Was it wise to push for such a large area? Or was it wiser to advocate a system of wilderness parks in Ontario, representative of "as many different physiographic, geological and biological zones as possible"?[31] Addison was nudging the Ontario preservation movement to support systems planning, begun by provincial park planners in 1972. They faced opposition from development-minded factions within MNR—the divisions of Lands, and Forests and Mines—and required political support. For this reason, Addison and fellow educator, David Bates, were organizing the Coalition For Wilderness (CFW).[32] Preservationists and park planners rejected Wermanger's notion of setting aside most of the Atikaki region. The systems approach featured a more strategic, scientifically-based rationale for selecting wilderness park sites, and a more protectionist management policy that excluded natural resource extraction and mechanized recreation. This new thinking gradually reshaped planning for Atikaki.

Undaunted by Addison's response, Wermanger produced a glossy, seventeen-page booklet entitled *Atikaki: A Proposal for a Viable Manitoba-Ontario Wilderness Area East of Lake Winnipeg* (1974).[33] Its multi-coloured zoning map and photographs made it appear more sophisticated than the Algonquin Wildlands League's *Wilderness Now* (1973) and the CFW's *Wilderness in Ontario* (1974), but both documents influenced Wermanger's thinking. Like other environmentalists in the 1970s, he used the

*Information* (Ontario MNR, 2004), 12.

[31] AP, Atikaki file, Addison to Fraser, 13 February 1973.

[32] George Warecki, "'Tired of Fighting Brushfires': the Coalition For Wilderness in Ontario, 1971-1978," presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Toronto, 2002.

[33] *Atikaki: A Proposal for a Viable Manitoba-Ontario Wilderness Area East of Lake Winnipeg* [ca. spring 1974]. All quotes from this source.

cultural authority of science to increase the legitimacy of his position.[34] He had consulted experts in various fields to compose thematic sections, reflecting current draft "master plans" for provincial parks. Wermanger projected a multiple-use framework, featuring two core wilderness zones for canoeists, with "regulated trapping and rice harvesting" by First Nations. Four Manitoba rivers would be protected, interspersed by resource development. Three peripheral access points (including Red Lake, Ontario) would disperse canoeists. Four "multirecreation" zones would cater to "hunters, motorboaters, snowmobilers, and car campers."[35] To provide access for tourism development and pulpwood cutting, a major road would be constructed along the east shore of Lake Winnipeg. Five peripheral "multiuse zones" would accommodate "carefully controlled resource extraction." The plan also included the ranges of four woodland caribou herds—one in Ontario—and a wildlife research zone.

***Prehistoric Aboriginal Pictographs.*** *Source: AP, Atikaki file, Atikaki: A Proposal For a Viable Wilderness Area East of Lake Winnipeg (ca. Spring 1974).*

What impact would the plan have on local residents? They would benefit economically from job training, with first priority in hiring, and regular consultations. Success depended on maintaining a wilderness core to attract recreationists who needed the existing service communities. Wermanger used government statistics to project significant economic gains.[36] Although he proposed that traditional, non-mechanized hunting be continued, fly-in fishing camps were "recorded as a loss" because their planes, motorboats and permanent structures posed "a serious threat" to the wilderness experience for canoeists.[37] Wermanger suggested compensation for the owners of these establishments (three lodges and a few "outcamps" in Manitoba; ten smaller lodges in Ontario) so they could relocate to isolated lakes further north. Evidently, the priority he gave to the canoeists' wilderness reduced the legitimacy of the resort operators as local interests.

[34] Stephen Bocking, *Nature's Experts: Science, Politics, and the Environment* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 22-5.

[35] One such zone would be located on the eastern half of Red Lake.

[36] He predicted, after seven years, a net gain of $3.5 million for the regional economy: $2.5 million and 174 jobs in Manitoba, and $1 million and 67 jobs in Ontario's Red Lake area. He omitted forestry, claiming there was sufficient volume for local mills "outside the wilderness area."

[37] Similar conflict during the late 1940s in the Quetico-Superior region prompted aircraft restrictions and the purchasing of resorts. R. Newell Searle, *Saving Quetico-Superior: A Land Set Apart* (Minnesota Historical Society, 1977), chap. 8; Killan and Warecki, "Battle for Wilderness in Ontario," 341-4.

He also downplayed forestry and mining conflicts, claiming that potential harvests were limited by poor site quality or incomplete surveys. The document's weak supporting data reflected the lack of provincial resource inventories in the area.[38]

More impressive was the brief evidence of political organization. The cover of *Atikaki* proclaimed its endorsement by five organizations: the Winnipeg Game and Fish Association, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, the Winnipeg Canoe Club, the Manitoba Naturalists Society, and the Manitoba Metis Federation. Together, they formed the Atikaki Coalition, allegedly representing 17,000 Manitobans and 110 Metis communities.[39] The sixteen people listed on the board of advisors included a public relations expert, a professor of Botany at the University of Manitoba—Dr. Jennifer Shay of the NPPAC, who helped found the province's ecological reserves program in 1973—and a retired insurance executive. Conspicuous by its absence was any mention of political support in Ontario.

## Policy Networks and Government Response

From 1974 to 1977, the preservationists dramatically intensified their activity in Ontario, building a broader policy network. By early 1975, the Atikaki Coalition had matured as a pressure group,[40] obtaining substantial financing, forming alliances with other groups, making formal presentations, engaging in public relations activity, and seeking regular contact with government officials.[41] There was a deliberate attempt to practice "quiet diplomacy," unlike the provocative politics of the Algonquin Wildlands League. The Coalition took the League's advice and gave the NPPAC the lead role. In November 1974 delegates of the AWL, NPPAC, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON, established 1931), and the Conservation Council of Ontario (CCO, established 1951) pledged their support.[42] Encouraged by his contacts, Wermanger wrote to the Hon. Leo Bernier, Minister of Natural Resources, on 23 December,

[38] Ecologist Dan Brunton conducted the first systematic life science inventory of Woodland Caribou Park in 1985. *Seasons* 26 (Autumn 1986), 32-8.

[39] *Atikaki,* 17.

[40] A. Paul Pross, *Group Politics and Public Policy* (Toronto: Oxford, 1986), 117, 120-1. See also Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log*; and "Green Lobbies: Pressure Groups and Environmental Policy," in *Canadian Environmental Policy: Ecosystems, Politics, and Process*, edited by Robert Boardman (Toronto: Oxford, 1992), 109-125.

[41] By January 1975, the coalition had raised and spent some $4,000; TUA, NPPAC, 86-023, box I, file 6, Notes on a Meeting of the Atikaki Coalition, 9 January 1975. In 1976, Wermanger was being paid a $10,000 annual salary, "courtesy of the Richardson Foundation"; Steve Riley, "Atikaki: A Wilderness Threatened by Man," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 March 1976. The Manitoba Naturalists' Society won the grant for the Atikaki campaign in 1976 and 1977; Wermanger was paid out of this money (the grant was $11,400 in 1977). *Nature Canada* 6 (January/March 1977), 24.

[42] TUA, NPPAC, 86-023, box I, file 7, Patrick Hardy to John Jack, 26 September 1974; *ibid*., 86-002, box 5, file 25, Terry Green to All Trustees, 28 November 1974.

formally introducing the proposal with a copy of *Atikaki* (1974).[43] It would be six weeks before the Minister's response arrived. Meanwhile, Wermanger held talks in Red Lake, Dryden and Kenora, where he discovered that "much more work" was required to win over the local "resource oriented" population.[44] Discussions with federal officials also confirmed continuing obstacles to the Bloodvein national park proposal. These revelations convinced the Atikaki Coalition to seek formal support in Ontario.[45]

In early February 1975, Bernier responded with a letter likely drafted by James Keenan, Executive Director of the Parks Division. MNR's preliminary review indicated "some serious resource use conflicts"—the fly-in fishing lodges, and the potential for mining and forestry.[46] As Progressive Conservative MPP for Kenora, Bernier sought to protect the region's economic base and employment for his constituents. Furthermore, he had learned how to manage the wilderness movement during the AWL's public campaigns. Significantly, the Minister did not reject the idea of a wilderness park somewhere in the region. In addition to the Irregular Lake Park Reserve, he noted, the Division of Parks had recently identified "further potential wilderness" to the north. However, formal designation would have to wait until the Government had developed its policy on the Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP) for Northwestern Ontario, an ambitious exercise begun in 1972.[47] Bernier's response expressed the Province's position for the next few years.

The reaction of local interests to the Atikaki proposal gradually became clear. Most tourist lodge operators, forestry and mining employees in the Red Lake area opposed the plan because they believed it would jeopardize their livelihoods.[48] Bernier encouraged that opinion by publicly opposing the Atikaki scheme.[49] Wermanger tried to assuage concerns in talks with local people, but his opposition to permanent access roads alienated forestry officials and an influential mining company.[50]

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[43] TUA, NPPAC, 86-023, box I, file 6, Marc Wermanger, Executive Director, Atikaki Coalition, to Hon. Leo Bernier, 23 December 1974.

[44] *Ibid.,* Marc Wermanger to J.D. Coats, Executive V.P., OFA, 21 January 1975.

[45] *Ibid.*, Notes on Meetings of Atikaki Coalition, 8-9 January 1975.

[46] Bernier wrote on 11 February 1975. I have not found this letter, but its contents are inferred from AP, Atikaki file, Marc Wermanger to Hon. Leo Bernier, 2 May 1975; and TUA, NPPAC, 86-023, file 6, Bernier to Robin Fraser, 25 August 1975.

[47] SLUP was designed to resolve conflicts for a twenty-year period among competing users of Crown land, but the process was slowed by a lack of expertise, basic research, and policy gaps for Ministry programs. Killan, *Protected Places*, 324-6.

[48] MNR staff gathered local reactions from newspapers, private meetings, and resolutions passed by various bodies. Wildlands League, Office Files, Toronto (hereafter WL, used with permission), "Report of the Ombudsman of Ontario Containing the Results of His Investigation Into the Complaint of Mr. Marc Wermanger," 15 June 1982, 16-18.

[49] Michael Keating, "Preserving the Wilderness Principle," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 27 November 1975.

[50] AP, Atikaki file, Wermanger to Terry, Pat, Les, and Bill, 6 March 1975. Mining had long been an

In June 1975, the Coalition leadership recognized that their project had failed to attract support from the membership of Ontario's conservation groups[51]—likely because its multiple-use framework was outdated. The Coalition responded by trying to forge links with other policy networks through increased public education. For the next two years the pressure group conducted a campaign along lines well established in previous Ontario battles. In October 1975, at a public meeting of the new Provincial Parks Advisory Council in Toronto, the NPPAC presented a brief on behalf of four other groups, supporting "park status" for Atikaki.[52] They knew the matter would be decided within a systems framework; the Parks Council (whose membership included NPPAC and FON representatives) was working closely with the Parks Division on developing the system plan documents.[53]

By February 1976, the Coalition had revised its basic positions. Convinced that the multiple-use aspects of the plan—hunting, forestry, and mining—were inconsistent with the emerging view of wilderness shared by the CFW and the Division of Parks, the advocates excluded the peripheral zones from their proposal. When planners warned that staff and budgetary constraints would likely postpone new parks for five years, the preservationists agreed to seek a provincial park reserve for the core area. Furthermore, they formalized their *de facto* provincial alliance by creating the Ontario Atikaki Council, chaired by the NPPAC's Terry Green.[54] Over the next year, the Council published an informative pamphlet, generated further press coverage, and crafted a "Revised Proposal" for a "Wilderness Park Reserve."[55] (Figure 2) This literature incorporated concepts from systems planning: the preservationists now claimed

anchor in the Red Lake area, "one of the richest gold producing areas in North America"; *Woodland Caribou Provincial Park: Background Information* (MNR, 1986), 8. See also Wightman and Wightman, *The Land Between*, 312-14; and Michael Barnes, *Red Lake: Golden Treasure Chest* (Renfrew: General Store Publishing House, 2008). Despite their apparent unity against Wermanger's proposal, private interests sometimes disagreed. The smaller operators of tourist and fly-in fishing camps—who "sold" isolation to their customers—were opposed to further road construction and cutting operations by the big mining and pulp and paper companies.

[51] AP, Atikaki file, "Notes on a Meeting of the Atikaki Committee" 16 June 1975.

[52] AP, Coalition Correspondence file, NPPAC Brief, 20 October 1975, and Terry Green to Bill Addison, 27 October 1975. The Canadian Nature Federation (CNF, established 1971) had now joined in support.

[53] Personal communication from Gerry Killan (Parks Council member in the 1970s), June 2005.

[54] AP, Atikaki file, J.D. Bates to Coalition Member Organizations, 6 January 1976; *ibid.*, NPPAC circular, 1 February 1976; and *ibid.*, Report of Meeting re: Atikaki, 1 February 1976. Now added to the previous list of groups was the Sierra Club of Ontario (established 1971).

[55] AP, Atikaki file, *Atikaki: A Proposal for a Viable Manitoba-Ontario Wilderness Area East of Lake Winnipeg*, by the Atikaki Council (ca. 1976-7); *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 March 1976; Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Office Files (formerly in Toronto; used with permission; hereafter CPAWS), NPPAC National Office Briefs, 1967-78, "Atikaki: A Revised Proposal for a Wilderness Park Reserve in Northwestern Ontario," Ontario Atikaki Council, April 1977. The pamphlet claimed 300,000 supporters in Manitoba and Ontario.


***Figure 2**: Revised Proposal. Source: AP, Atikaki file, Atikaki: A Proposal For a Viable Wilderness Area East of Lake Winnipeg, by the Atikaki Council (ca. 1976-7).*

that the proposed reserve would represent two of the thirteen "site regions" (zones of distinct earth and life science features) identified by Parks bureaucrats.

In the spring and summer of 1977 the Ontario Atikaki Council intensified its lobbying. It held meetings with senior MNR personnel and with provincial politicians from all three parties. The most significant catch was Dr. J. Keith Reynolds, the well-respected Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, who offered to arrange a meeting with the new Minister, Frank Miller (MPP for Muskoka). A successful, self-made businessman, Miller had an "affable," even "folksy" manner cultivated by his working-class roots. His experience as a chemical engineer, car dealer, teacher, and tourist resort owner made him a self-described fiscal conservative, who cared about people's struggle for economic security. To prepare for the meeting, Reynolds followed standard ministry procedure and initiated a formal review of the revised Atikaki plan, circulating it for comments to the divisions of Mines, Lands, Forests, Fish and Wildlife, and Parks.[56] Most were already well aware of the plan and had been formulating their respective positions for months.[57]

Among the divisional reviews, one stands out because its content was not fully reported by the minister in his decision. Fish and Wildlife staff rejected the Atikaki proposal. This division, like the others, fiercely guarded its author-

[56] Correspondence in AO, RG-1-51-2, box 7, folder NW-3 (1977-8); AP, Atikaki file, Memo. to Members of Atikaki Coalition for Ontario from Terry Green, 28 April 1977. Quote and biographical sketch on Frank Miller are from Claire Hoy, *Bill Davis: A Biography* (Toronto: Methuen, 1985), 392-4.

[57] For Divisional reviews, see AO, MNR Policy Co-ordination Secretariat's Outdoor Recreation Files, RG 1-46-1, acc. 23964, box 7, file 13-35-19, Atikaki; and AO, RG 1-51-2, box 7, file NW-3 (1977-8).

ity to manage resources. The biologists argued that the plan would restrict their ability to conduct research, manage fish and wildlife, and to "supervise allowable harvest." It offered "no additional benefits" to Ontario's woodland caribou or fisher—both erroneously described in *Atikaki* (1974) as "diminishing"—while local residents would suffer economically by removing "opportunity for their traditional ways of life." The proposal would harm Natives and non-Natives engaged in "wild rice, fur, and commercial fish harvests," and Treaty Indians from "adjacent, southern communities" who occasionally harvested caribou.[58] The attention devoted to local residents in this policy review was calculated to enhance its political weight. The authors quantified the impact of Wermanger's plan on commercial and sport fishing, hunting, and tourist establishments. Instead of the $1 million net gain promised by Wermanger, Fish and Wildlife officials projected a net *loss* in total annual income of $2.5 million, "*mostly* to area residents." Such a bleak economic forecast was certain to grab the minister's attention.[59]

On 5 July Miller and Reynolds—well briefed by regional and divisional directors—met in Toronto with Wermanger, Green, and other Council representatives.[60] Miller's final decision had virtually been made, shaped by his ministry's internal review, although he didn't reveal this at the time. The issue was not whether there would be a wilderness park, but its size and location. Miller and Reynolds identified forestry conflict in the southeast—the timber holdings of the Ontario-Minnesota Pulp and Paper Company—as a major obstacle to the Atikaki proposal.[61] As for mining, Reynolds pointed out that the ministry was awaiting the results of a federal-provincial uranium study. Miller explained that he would finalize MNR's position, and then forward it for approval to the Resources Development Policy Field.[62] Headed by a senior cabinet minister, this body was established in the 1972 reorganization by the Davis Government to co-ordinate policy among related ministries.[63]

The meeting generated some good

[58] The review is in AO, RG 1-46-1, acc. 23964, box 7, file 13-35-19, Atikaki. There were 39 traplines in the area; 49 of 81 trappers were Treaty Indians.

[59] The Division of Forests also forecast severe economic impacts: closure of the Kenora mill, loss of pulp, lumber and ties for several local and regional businesses, and associated unemployment. *Ibid.*, D.P. Drysdale for Exec. Dir., Division of Forests, to J.K. Reynolds, 9 June 1977.

[60] AO, RG 1-51-2, box 7, Volume 2, file 1977-78, NW-3, Parks Planning Branch, "Briefing Notes for the Hon. Frank Miller," 29 June 1977.

[61] Four years earlier the company had lost access to forests in Quetico when it was reclassified as a wilderness park. Alternate timber limits were assigned to the north.

[62] AP, Atikaki file, reports, press releases, and correspondence, June-July 1977. MNR's account of the meeting is in AO, RG 1-46-1, acc. 23964, box 7, file 13-35-19, Atikaki; see also AO, RG 1-51-2, box 7, folder NW-3(1977-8), Volume 2, J.K. Reynolds to L.H. Eckel, 5 July 1977.

[63] Initiatives approved by the Resources Development Policy Field usually had two more hurdles: the Policy and Priority Board of Cabinet, and the Management Board. Killan, *Protected Places*, 243-4; Randall White, *Ontario 1610-1985: A Political and Economic History* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1985), 295-6.

will, but the preservationists' press and radio coverage had an inflammatory effect in northwestern Ontario. A policy network of resource extraction industries and their employees, development-minded local councils, sportsmen's organizations, and the media swung into action. Ontario-Minnesota Company spokespersons warned that the Atikaki proposal would deprive them of necessary timber from part of their Pakwash concession and the Minaki Crown Management Unit, thereby forcing closure of the mill in Kenora. Wermanger vehemently denied the company's statements and disputed its statistical evidence. Other local opponents, led by Kenora's Leo Bernier (now Minister of Northern Affairs), tried to discredit the preservationists, pointing out that the wilderness plan came from outside the district and the province.[64]

After three years of hard work and changing visions, Wermanger and his Ontario allies received a decision from the Minister of Natural Resources in August 1977. Early that month, Miller publicly announced that while he endorsed the principle of a wilderness park in Atikaki, he would not accept the Council's recently revised proposal because of logging and mining conflicts. Instead, he would create two separate park reserves: Woodland Caribou, including the Irregular Lake Park Reserve and extending northward (1,400 square miles), and Stout Lake (875 square miles), an area just north of the Atikaki region. (Figure 3) Three waterway park reserves would also protect access corridors from the Red Lake area.[65] In a letter to Terry Green, Miller cited other objections to the Atikaki proposal, especially its negative impact on "hunting, angling, and cottaging" (some fourteen commercial tourist lodges and twenty-five commercial outposts would be affected), and its failure to represent more than one site region recommended by the draft systems plan.[66]

Members of the Atikaki Council were disappointed by the minister's decision. Some displayed tact, commending Miller for his support of the wilderness park concept.[67] Wermanger criticized the northern Stout Lake Reserve as of "very inferior quality."[68] Over the next two years, he pressed the ministry to reconsider. His brief to the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment (1978) blamed a power imbalance—ensuring that individuals and non-profit groups could not compete with northern resource, economic, and political interests—and a monopoly on information

[64] AP, Atikaki file, Memo. to Members of Ontario Atikaki Coalition from Terry Green, 13 July 1977; *Toronto Star*, 6 July 1977; *Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 July 1977; Kenora *Miner and News*, 8 July 1977, and 12 July 1977; Thunder Bay *Times News*, 9 July 1977 and 12 July 1977; AP, Atikaki file, "Clarification of the Impact of Atikaki," ca. 21 July 1977. See also Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, *Angler and Hunter* (September 1977), 12.

[65] AP, Atikaki file, Press Release, 9 August 1977.

[66] *Ibid.*, Frank Miller to Terry Green, 18 August 1977.

[67] *Ontario Naturalist* 17 (October 1977), 35.

[68] See Thunder Bay *Times News* and Thunder Bay *Chronicle Journal*, 24 January 1978.

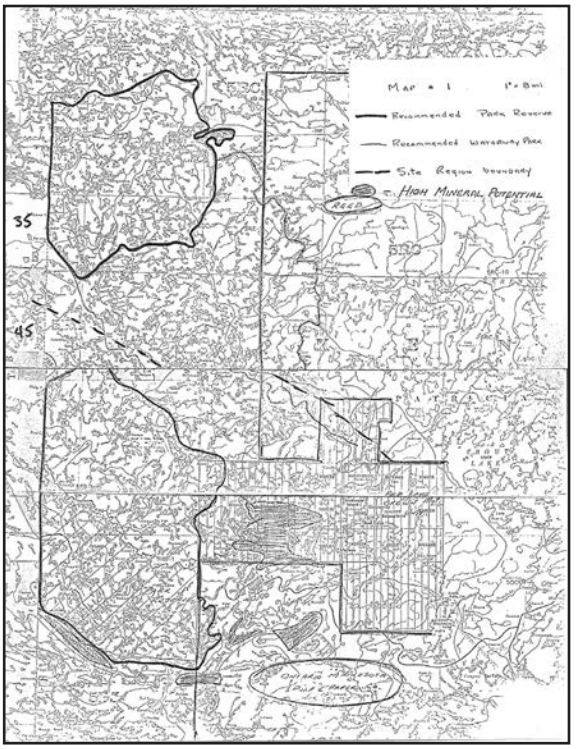



***Figure 3:*** *Woodland Caribou (south) and Stout Lake (north) Park Reserves. Source: AP, Atikaki file, Hon. Frank Miller to Terry Green, 18 August 1977.*

held by the "establishment."[69] There was considerable evidence supporting these allegations. In terms of resources—financial, human, and information—power relations in the north did favour the historic tradition of economic development. The pro-development policy network held important structural advantages over that of the preservationists.[70] However, the balance was clearly shifting in favour of wilderness protection.

## Balancing Priorities

Like other major resource issues, the Atikaki proposal was ultimately decided in a political fashion.[71] The minister and his deputies balanced wilderness protection and economic development. Reserving land for recreation and conservation was a noteworthy achievement, considering the period was one of severe fiscal restraint. But the government's decision also supported local northwestern Ontario business and employment opportunities, including tourism, as directed by the Resources Development Policy Field.

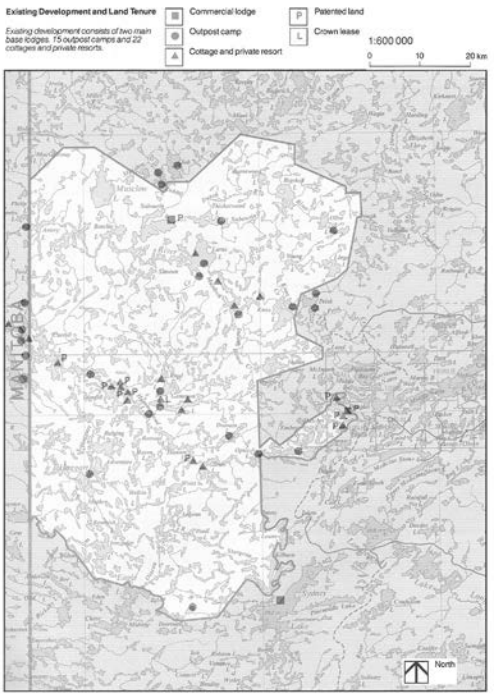
The economic context was crucial. Ontario's post-war economic boom ended in the mid-1970s. Falling birth rates and much slower population growth led to a recession in 1973-1974, exposing "structural" problems. "The mines and forests of the north" faced "shifts in world demand and problems of resource depletion."[72] Mining, forestry, and tourism were crucial to the northwestern Ontario economy for much of the twentieth century. Tourism—already well

[69] AO, RG-1, IB-3, box 58, file WOODC-3, 1977-8, Brief to the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment, 19 January 1978, 6-10. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Northern Ontario passed Wermanger's brief to the Executive Coordinator for Outdoor Recreation in Toronto, who responded with a detailed internal memo. *Ibid.,* Lloyd Eckel to Lew Ringham, 17 February 1978.

[70] This points to a broader problem in environmental policy-making: despite "democratization of the policy process" to include new actors like preservation groups, "the power of different actors ... remains strongly differentiated and the representation of non-productive interests remains underdeveloped." Hessing and Howlett, *Canadian Natural Resource and Environmental Policy*, 154.

[71] On resource decision-making as an "inherently political process," see Hessing and Howlett, *Canadian Natural Resource and Environmental Policy*, chap. 8.

[72] White, *Ontario*, 297.




***Existing Development and Land Tenure.*** *Source: Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986).*

established in the region before World War II because of railways and Highways 17 and 71—enjoyed "a burst of activity" in the 1950s. Cottages were built, roads improved, and "new fly-in sport fishing camps" opened, served by floatplanes based in "Kenora, Nestor Falls and, later on, Red Lake and Sioux Lookout." After the Trans-Canada highway was completed westward to Kenora in the early 1960s, tourism became the region's second most important revenue source. Still, pulp and paper provided the "largest source of employment and income in north-western Ontario," generating roughly $70 million annually in the late 1960s compared to $30 million for tourism.[73] In 1970, 58% of the province's pulp and paper production was newsprint; 4.6% of that output was produced at Kenora, home to the Ontario-Minnesota mill.[74]

The provincial government accepted responsibility for fostering and directing economic development in 1968, under Premier John Robarts. Initially called "Design For Development," this effort evolved under the Davis government into a multi-level, systematic program directed by the Cabinet Committee on Policy Development.[75] In October 1970, Design For Development produced a framework subsequently modified and adopted as the official government policy for northwestern Ontario. (The SLUP program would provide "a more definitive statement of policies" within this context.) It promoted "moderate expansion": 18,000–25,000 new jobs, economic diversification, and strengthening of resource-based industry. At the same time, the directive promoted protection of "the natural environment for preserving the quality of life" in the region.[76]

[73] Rea, *The Prosperous Years*, 159-60. By the mid-1970s, tourism was "one of the three or four leading industries in the province."

[74] Wightman and Wightman, *The Land Between*, 317. On the various economic sectors, see *ibid*, chap. 5, and Rea, *The Prosperous Years*, chap. 8.

[75] Rea, *The Prosperous Years*, 231-2.

[76] AO, MNR Land Use Co-ordination Branch, Land Use Planning Files, RG 1-343, acc. 24726, box 1, file NW SLUP, J.K. Reynolds to G.H.U. Bayly, 18 December 1974; *ibid*., "Results of Public Participation Program/ Candidate Policy Proposals/ SLUP/NW Ont.," 1 April 1975, 1.

*"Roads associated with surrounding logging activity will provide opportunities for planned access to the park." Source: Woodland Caribou Provincial Park Background Information (MNR, 1986), 10.*

Bound by this official policy, and mindful of the divisional directors' warnings of dire economic consequences, the Minister of Natural Resources and his deputies were obligated to reject the full Atikaki proposal. Despite allegations that Frank Miller's 1977 policy decision lacked "validity,"[77] it was a reasonable compromise based on divergent public views, governed by twin provincial imperatives.

## Ironic Epilogue

In the early 1980s, the minister's 1977 compromise unexpectedly unraveled. Woodland Caribou and Stout Lake Reserves were reassessed for their park potential as part of the ministry's West Patricia Land Use Plan, within the Northwestern Region park system plan. Preservationists were delighted to learn that planners now concurred with their appraisal of the Stout Lake area as "inferior." It was withdrawn as a "candidate park" and the boundary recommended for Woodland Caribou was "enlarged to roughly parallel that for Atikaki." Hope renewed, the Atikaki Council lobbied for a "serious reappraisal" of its updated proposal.[78] The government's Strategic Land Use Plan drew the preservationists into a second round of planning (1979-83), destined to be shaped, like the first, by a mixture of local and provincial interests.

## Conclusion

During the 1970s, the complex policy community for Atikaki featured some interesting relationships. The Ontario Division of Parks was fighting the same resource extraction policy network that the preservationists faced. Park planners needed political support to establish wilderness parks in the site regions identified by their draft system plan. For this reason, they welcomed the Atikaki proposal—though never in favour of the full plan—and were content to let pressure build on senior bureaucrats and politicians. The planners and the preservationists used each other to attain their respective goals. Beyond this relationship, the sometimes exaggerated critique of the policy process by Marc Wermanger pro-

[77] In February 1980 Wermanger initiated a formal complaint with the Ombudsman of Ontario. In June 1982 the Ombudsman concluded that the Minister's decision was not "unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory," nor did the Minister exercise "discretionary power...for an improper purpose or irrelevant grounds." "Report of the Ombudsman," 25.

[78] *Wildland News* 12 (May 1980): 6-7; WL, Woodland-Caribou file, James Auld to Lorne Almack, 8 April 1981; *ibid.*, Ontario Atikaki Council, "A Response to West Patricia Land Use Plan. Woodland Caribou Wilderness Park Proposal," July 1982, 1.

vided healthy dissent and improved the government's accountability.[79]

The Atikaki episode was a taste of things to come, both for the wilderness movement and the provincial government. It confirmed important lessons about organization and strategy—sometimes how not to proceed—and helped to determine the respective positions of various policy actors for the subsequent SLUP battle. In this second phase of contentious public planning, a more effective coalition ("Parks For Tomorrow") worked hard to broaden the policy network, decentralize leadership, and pay closer attention to land use conflicts.[80] The government confirmed its longstanding commitment to protect local economic interests, and its more recent commitment to a system of wilderness parks. Conflict resolution continued to demand difficult compromises.[81]

Planning for Atikaki meant balancing competing human priorities over environmental resources. In other preservation battles, the local values were often economic or development-oriented, while conservationists claimed that wilderness areas were of regional or national significance. But in this case, both local and provincial interests regarded economic development and wilderness protection—however defined—as priorities. The tricky part was weighing these imperatives. Finally, this episode embodied the classic "dilemma" of "northern development," perhaps "the sharpest focus for the political issues of the 1970s."[82] Since the late 1980s, similar environmental issues have been measured by "sustainable development."[83] Further studies like this one might illustrate how other governments have wrestled with the challenge.[84*]

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[79] On democratic environmental politics, see Bocking, *Nature's Experts*, chap. 8.

[80] Killan, *Protected Places*, 340-54; interview with Bill Addison and David Bates, 20 September 1986, Kakabeka Falls, Ontario.

[81] The *Woodland Caribou Signature Site Management Plan* was finally approved in June 2007; <www.ontarioparks.com/english/planning_pdf/wood/wcss_PMP.pdf>, accessed 19 November 2008. Controversy over "non-conforming uses" also plagued Manitoba's Atikaki Provincial Park; Lehr, "Origins and Development," 250-1. See also *Atikaki Provincial Park and Bloodvein Heritage River Management Plan* (Manitoba Conservation, April 2008), <www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/management_plans/atikaki/atikaki_pdf/atikaki_management_plan_web.pdf>, accessed 19 November 2008. Another significant legacy is the perception of Atikaki as a bioregion. Parks Canada designated the Bloodvein as a Canadian Heritage River, and the interprovincial "Atikaki/Woodland Caribou/Accord First Nations (Pimachiowin Aki)" wilderness is on Canada's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites. <www.pc.gc.ca/progs/spm-whs/itm3-/site11/page1_E.asp>, accessed 19 November 2008.

[82] Robert Page, *Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma* Canada in Transition Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), x. Page was referring to the Far North.

[83] See World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); *Journal of Canadian Studies* Special Issue on Sustainability 31 (Spring 1996); and *Sustainability the Challenge: People, Power, and the Environment*, edited by L. Anders Sandberg and Sverker Sorlin (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998).

[84] My sincere thanks to Prof. Gerry Killan and one anonymous reviewer for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper.